

OM **BEST OF ZANSKAR**

This is truly one of the finest long distance treks in the Himalayas. The prospect of undertaking this journey is at the same time daunting, exciting and challenging. For the explorer in you it is the stuff to make the adrenaline flow! It is something you will remember for the rest of your life.

Travelers and merchants passing through to the Silk Route have visited Ladakh through the ages. High up in the Himalayas, Ladakh is dominated by Buddhists and shares borders with Tibet, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

The multihued mountains in Ladakh and Zaskar are dotted with small hamlets and many monasteries, called Gompas in the Tibetan language. The land is spectacularly preserved with its native culture still intact, as it happens in most remote mountains of the World.

Ladakh and Zaskar offer trekking at higher altitudes than elsewhere in the World. The lowest altitudes in the region are as high as 3000 Mts above sea level!

DAY 01 ARRIVAL DELHI

Assistance & Traditional welcome on arrival in the capital of India & followed by transfer to Hotel for Overnight.

From the spacious and planned streets of New Delhi, the imperial capital of India, Delhi is perhaps one of the best examples in the world where the 'old' meets the 'new'. Strolling through the streets of Delhi the contrasts continue. You will experience the ringing bells of bicycle rickshaws, see Mercedes Benz cars driving around Eating out also offers a variety of options from a rich Mughlai curry to a wood fired pizza. On this sightseeing tour of Old and New Delhi your senses will come alive as you encounter the many sights and sounds this amazing city has to offer.

DAY 02 DELHI / MANALI :

After breakfast provide in time transfer to railway station to connect the Shatabadi Express for Kalka. Assistance on arrival at Kalka Station & followed by drive to Manali, In the evening in Manali & check into Hotel for Overnight.

DAY 03 MANALI :

Manali Situated at the northern end of Kulu Valley, Manali has spectacular views of snow capped peaks and wooded slopes. The Beas rushes along its rocky course amid grassy meadows carpeted with wild flowers which wagtails hop along from stone to stone along the stream's edge. Manali offers marvellous walks through dappled orchards and fairy tale forests of deodar. Visit the Vashist sulphur springs and Jagatsukh 6 kms away

in the midst of a picturesque village. Hadimba Devi temple, built in 1553 AD is dedicated to the Goddess Hadima (Hirma Devi) the wife of Bhima. It has a four tiered pagoda-shaped roof with a doorway carved with figures and symbols. Visit the Tibetan monastery and is famous for its carpet weaving and Tibetan handicrafts. Overnight in Manali

DAY 04: MANALI - DARCHA

Drive from Manali to Darcha, crossing over the Rohtang Pass, a scenic winding highway over the Pir Panjal range. Descend into the Lahoul valley and continue onto camp at Darcha.

DAY 05: DARSHA - CAMP (4-5 hours)

From Darsha follow the track until the last hamlet, then a good footpath. Pass a spectacular gorge. Continue along the left bank, then cross a first ford. Good camp 1 hour beyond the ford, groves.

DAY 06: CAMP - RAMJAK (6-7 hours)

Continue on the left bank until reaching a second (major) ford, and then go up the right hand valley. There are good paths on both sides of the stream, but both are hard going. Good camp at Ramjak in small meadow, spring.

DAY 07: RAMJAK - SHINKUN LA - CAMP AT THE GUMBURANJON (8-9 hours)

From the camp, climb moderate slopes to the foot of the pass. Several easy stream Crossings (4 hours). The ground flattens out and the path zigzags through a moraine as far as the Shinkun-la (5090m, 5 ½ hours). The desert is steep and dangerous for horses (ice and some fallen rocks). Cross a final fin to reach the first meadows. Cross several easy streams, then go down an escarpment towards a small plateau. Nice view of the Gumburanjon. Good camp between two streams.

DAY 08: GUMBURANJON - TABLE (6 hours)

Climb down a mass of fallen rocks, then cross several streams. After one hour, you pass beneath the face of the Gumburanjon, then an easy descent towards Kargyak (4100m) on the right bank. Two hours after Kargyak, you reach Table. Good camp.

DAY 09: TABLE - PURNE (6 hours)

From Table, continue on the Right Bank along an easy path. ½ hours before Tanze, you cross in front of a narrow gorge where this route joins up with Darcha - Padum route by the Baralacha-la and Phirtsela. Tanze is a small village, gompa in ruins a bit higher up. A short distance beyond Tanze, there is a bridge across to the left bank. Monotonous going

across morainic terrain. Slight rise leading to Kuru, major village of livestock breeders. Afterwards, an excellent path leads steadily lower. Arrival in Teta (3 ½ hours), beautiful village. The path continues downward near the river. Stay on the left bank, then climb gentle slope up to Jal. Next comes a steep descent towards a large bridge which you cross to get to Purne. Camp at Purne.

DAY 10: PURNE - ICHAR (5-6 hours)

From Purne, go back down, cross the bridge, then go up the left bank. The trail that overhangs the Tsarap is sometimes tricky and hard going. Frequent canyons of pudding stores. Pass a bit above a hanging bridge, which leads to the village of Cha (from Cha it is possible to go to Phuktal without horses, which is dangerous). Two hours after you arrive at Keydang, a small village in a poplar ove. Carry on until Harsani (teashop). Pass below the village of Surle. The trail is still not good with several difficult stretches. Arrive at a large bridge, which leads to Ichar. Very good camp. Interesting fortified village.

DAY 11: ICHAR - MUNE (5 hours)

Cross back over to the left bank, then a gradual climb before coming to a tributary (bridge). Gradual descent down towards Reru, then quite a beautiful plain covered with flowers (July) as far as Mune. Possible to camp opposite monastery.

DAY 12: MUNE - PADUM (5 hours)

From the monastery, go down a steep incline - the main trail. After two hours, you arrive at Baxlan Gompa, a Kagyupa monastery famous for its prayer wheel (180 cm high). From Bardan, a dusty road suitable for motor traffic lead to Padum without difficulty. Several quite beautiful villages on the opposite bank. Padum (3650 m), possibilities for fresh supplies in certain (only rice, tsampa, sugar, tea and sometimes kerosene), several hotels, a restaurant (1985). Camping possibilities 1 km down the road to Kargil.

DAY 13: PADUM - KARSHA (3-4 hours)

From Padum, head towards Pipiting, then a dusty plain towards the Doda river. A new bridge built in 1984 across the Doda, then climb towards Karsha. Beautiful Gelupa monastery dates from the 15th century. Camp at Karsha.

DAY 14: KARSHA - PISHU (5 hours)

Easy stretch on the often hot and dusty bank of the Zanskar river. Above Rinam, small stream and shelter formed by the rocks. Before Pishu, make a little detour to see the longest hanging bridge over the Zansker(55m). it leads to Zangla.(from Zangla, a trail goes to Padum via Tsazar and Thongde). Attractive campsite below the village of Pishu.

DAY 15: PISHU - HANUMIL (5 hours)

Continue on left bank. Easy going sometimes along the river, sometimes across the morainic plateau. A bridge before Pidmo, then another 2 hours until Hanumil. Very good campsite 100 metres past the 2 houses.

DAY 16: HANUMIL - PARFI LA - SNERTSE (6 hours)

Still on a good and easy path, $\frac{3}{4}$ hour beyond Hanumil, small stream on the left. Take on a supply of water.

The path leads away from the edge of the Zanskar, up to the plateau, then to the foot of the pass. Steep and difficult climb for the animals as far as the Parfi-la (3900m, 4 hours). Rather steep descent until reaching the Oma-Chu river. Good bridge, then up a 500 mt sandy slope. Then along the slope as far as the sheepfolds of Snertse.

DAY 17: SNERTSE - HANUMA LA - LINGSHED (7 hours)

Long gradual ascent towards the Hanuma-la. Through gorges first, then easier. After 2 hours, pass a sheepfold (sometimes milk for sale). A further 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours to reach the summit of the Hanuma-la (4700m). a 1000 meter steep descent, then a 300 mt climb along the mountain side. From this small pass, easy descent towards lingshed (about 3800m). Campsite near the monastery (Gelupa).

DAY 18: LINGSHED - FOOT OF THE SENGGE LA (6 hours)

Easy climb of $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour up to the Murgum-la (4100m). continue climbing, pass an escarpment then go along the slope. Wonderful landscape, view of the valley of Nierag, on the other bank of the Zanskar. Gentle descent towards the villages of Gongma (3840m) and Skiumpata. Then climb gradually along the mountain side up to the foot of the Sengge-la (Tent-restaurant run by a monk in Lingshed).

DAY 19 : FOOT OF THE SENGGE LA - PHOTOKSAR (7 hours)

Rather steep climb to the Sengge-la taking from 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours (5000m), then a short slope leads into a broad valley. Easy going (one ford) then gentle climb towards the Burniktse-la (4200m), beautiful view. Descent towards Photoksar (3750m), splendid village at the base of huge mountain walls. Abandoned gompa 20 minutes away above the village.

DAY 20: PHOTOKSAR - SISIR LA - HANUPATTA (6 hours)

From the village, gentle climb up to a large chorten (1-hour), then long ascent of the Sirsir-la. The last third is steep. Pass is situated at 4800m. Easy descent to the river. Cross-onto the left bank (bridge). From there, a path leads up to the Sniugutse-la (5000m) reaching Shilla and Lamayuru without going through Hanupatta, many easy fords (3 days). Then long descent into a stony valley. Good campsite a short distances before the village of Hanupatta.

DAY 21: HANUPATTA - WANLA (5 hours)

From Hanupatta, continue across the slope until entering the gorges. Since August 1984, a new path cut into the rocks avoids the difficult fords. At the junction of the rivers, chorten and religious banners on a flat. Pass a ridge, then go down until reaching a good bridge across the Yapola. Then, some easy, some difficult stretches (fallen rocks) until Phenjilla (3 hours). A little beyond the village, crosses again onto the left bank (bridge). Then on a flat to Wanla. Beautiful gomba.

DAY 22: WANLA - LAMAYURU (3 hours)

Go up the Shillakong along the right bank, cross it (bridge), then arrive in Shilla. Pass the village, go to a broad chorten then follow a narrow and dry gorge as far as the Prinkiti-La (3726m). Easy descent, then pass an escarpment. Cross the river and go towards the village of Lamayuru. Short climb towards the monastery which is the most photographed in Ladakh. Camp at Lamayuru.

DAY 23: LAMAYURU - ULETOKPO

Drive to Uletokpo (54kms). Check into Mercury luxury camp, set amidst blossoming apricot orchards with sparkling streams flowing gently through the campsite. Evening at leisure. Overnight in camp.

DAY 24: ULETOKPO - LIKIR - ALCHI - LEH

Drive to Leh en-route visiting Likir and Alchi monasteries. Overnight stay at hotel Caravan Centre, Leh or similar. Likir Monastery: A few kilometers short of Alchi, a scenic road passing through rocky mountains and the river, takes one to this Gomba which contains a number of enormous clay statues of the Buddha in different forms.

Founded in the 12 century, Likir was the first royal monastery to be established in Ladakh under direct Tibetan influence. Alchi Monastery: 66 Km west of Leh, this monastery consists of six temples which contain a chorten, seated Buddhas and exquisite paintings. Over 10 centuries old, profusely painted walls depict the events of the Buddha's life, lamas and musicians. Its murals, dating from the 11th and 12th centuries, pre-date the Tibetan style of painting that is present in all the other gompas. Some of them are reminiscent of the paintings of the far-off Ajanta caves and are presumed to be almost the sole survivors (along with some in Phuktal Gomba in Zaskar and Tabo in Spiti) of the Buddhist style current in Kashmir during the first millennium A.D.

DAY 25: SHEY - THIKSHEY - HEMIS

Full day visit to the famous Thiksey, Shey and Hemis monasteries. Overnight in hotel. **Thiksey:** 19 Kms from Leh, Thiksey is one of the largest and most impressive Gompas of Ladakh. The Thiksey monastery provides a panoramic view of the green Indus Valley from its vantagepoint atop a hill. It has chambers full of statues, Stupas and colorful

Tankhas.

Shey: This summer palace of the erstwhile King of Leh set upon a hill. The monastery itself has a 7.5-meter high, copper statue of a sitting Buddha, wrought in gold. This is the largest of its kind in the world. **Hemis:** Situated just off the Manali-Leh Highway, Ladakh's biggest and wealthiest monastery is situated on the Leh - Manali road. It's popularity stems from the annual festival held here in summer. The festival coincides with Guru Padma Sambhava's (Buddha) birthday. It contains quite a few statues in gold and Stupas decorated with precious stones. It has a superb collection of Tankhas, including one, which is supposed to be the largest in existence and is exhibited only once every 12 years.

DAY 26: LEH

Day at leisure. Optional visit to the bazaar for shopping. Evening attend local Ladakhi cultural show. Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 27: LEH-DELHI

Transport to the airport for flight to Delhi. Meeting and assistance upon arrival at Delhi and transfer to the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 28: DEPART DELHI